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Yugoslav Foreign Minister Visits Czechoslovakia

Yugoslav Foreign Minister Marko Nikezic voiced Yugoslavia's "special interest and sympathies" for current events in Czechoslovakia on his arrival in Prague on 13 May. Nikezic's visit will precede by a few days that of Yugoslav Deputy Premier Kiro Gligorov, the guiding hand behind Belgrade's economic reform. The visits probably signal the start of closer cooperation between the two regimes. Nikezic undoubtedly will advise the reformist Czechoslovak regime on ways to deal with Soviet, Polish, and East German pressure as well as ways Belgrade might help.

25X1
25X1

Bulgarian Leadership Examines Drought Areas

At least six top Bulgarian party leaders fanned out to various okrugs over the weekend for a first hand examination of the effects of the drought. Bulgarian officials have described the drought to US embassy officers as the worst in memory. On 10 May Sofia Radio admitted that the loss of grain crops in one okrug alone (there are 28 okrugs) will amount to 15 million leva (2 leva=US $1). The Bulgarian leadership undoubtedly is concerned over the unsettling effects of the drought on the populace who are already discontented over the January rise in consumer prices.

25X1
25X1

Yugoslav Church-State Conflict

Party leaders in predominantly Catholic Slovenia and Croatia, alarmed over the recent upsurge of religious influence there, have recently taken steps to curb political discussion in the church.

An editor of a Zagreb newspaper has been sentenced to nine months imprisonment for his articles concerning religious societies in socialist countries, and a religious monthly has been banned for criticizing the regime's stance on Vietnam and the treatment of Jews in the USSR. The Croatian mass organization (the Socialist Workers' Alliance) recently proposed at a meeting on 18 March that its members form committees

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to deal with religious matters at local levels.

A Slovenian Catholic priest, Ivan Petric, was tried and convicted last October for allegedly using religion for political purposes. He had eulogized a young Yugoslav killed fighting in the US army in Vietnam as having fallen in a "holy and just cause". This was the first such trial in many years, and was a sudden departure from the careful treatment accorded Catholic officials since Belgrade renewed quasi-diplomatic relations with the Vatican in 1966.

Slovenian and Croatian Party officials, a large number of whom have favored a benevolent attitude toward Catholicism, now find themselves fighting an uphill battle to curtail the rapid reassertion of church influence, especially among the young people. Unless the republic parties are willing to resort to more repressive measures however,-- which is unlikely--the steps already taken or proposed will probably have little effect in curbing the spread of religious influence. 25X1 25X1

Czechoslovak Minister of Heavy Industry Speaks Against Strikes

Increasing wage demands backed by strikes in Pisek, Opava, and other places are unfounded, according to Minister Krejci.

Speaking at a meeting of Slovak enterprise managers, Krejci also condemned the apparent informal creation of "groups of producers according to their branch interests." He said that the official transition to a new organizational arrangement of companies would be effected as of 1 January 1969, but would, in exceptional cases, be implemented on 1 July this year. 25X1 25X1

Krejci's message seems to be "wait for us."

Hungary To Send Four-Five Thousand More Workers To The GDR

Jozsef Rozsa, manpower chief of the Hungarian Ministry of Labor, announced on 4 May that Hungary would send four to five thousand more laborers to the GDR in 1968. Last year Hungary sent three thousand unskilled workers to the GDR for a three year apprenticeship. Apparently the arrangement proved satisfactory for both countries.

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Rozsa displayed some sensitivity to charges that unemployment in Hungary is behind this arrangement. He countered such charges with the claim that some Hungarian industries were complaining of labor shortages. It is probably true that Hungarian industries could use more skilled laborers but there are few job prospects for unskilled youths in Hungary. 25X1

Gyorgy Lukacs Strikes Again

Gyorgy Lukacs, Hungary's foremost Marxist philosopher, is again tweeking the noses of would-be ideologists in the Hungarian party leadership. In an article in the literary journal Kortars, Lukacs replied to a recent attack on his theories by Gyorgy Aczel, the regime's cultural watchdog, by calling for the elimination of "slightly improved and modernized dogmas, and the uncritical adoption of even the most stupid Western crazes."

Lukacs, whose communist credentials date from the Bela Kun regime of 1919, has been a constant embarrassment to the Kadar regime. In 1956 he joined Imre Nagy's cabinet and was subsequently excommunicated. Even though Lukacs refused to publicly repent, he was readmitted to the party last year, although with the clear understanding that his readmission did not imply party approval of his theories.

Recently, Lukacs published several articles in foreign magazines attacking both Stalinist die-hards and the desertion of Marxist principles. On 27 April, Aczel published a pettifogging attack on Lukacs' formulas which, far from discrediting them, only gave them increased publicity and began a dialogue in which Aczel can only come out second best. 25X1

25X1

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